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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8278  
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0952  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7941  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6113  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4442  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2103  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4416  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3516  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8548  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5993  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0686  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2820  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000578

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA'S CHILD SOLDIERS: GSL AGREES TO JOINT  
VERIFICATION WITH UNICEF; OBSTACLES REMAIN

REF: A. COLOMBO 536  
[1](#)B. COLOMBO 478  
[1](#)C. COLOMBO 441  
[1](#)D. COLOMBO 412  
[1](#)E. COLOMBO 410  
[1](#)F. COLOMBO 314

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James R. Moore. Reasons: 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: At a dinner on June 10, Defense Secretary Rajapaksa, Justice Secretary Gamalath and UNICEF Country Representative Duamelle agreed to a joint verification plan in which UNICEF officials and Justice Ministry staff would seek to identify the whereabouts of the approximately 70 child soldiers currently in UNICEF's database. The parties agreed to joint verification teams that would visit the families who had reported their children missing to UNICEF as well as the TMVP camps themselves. This verification process would be accompanied by a public information campaign that would communicate the GSL's zero tolerance policy for child soldiers. While a very welcome initiative, further releases would directly contradict Eastern Province Chief Minister Pillaiyan's claim that the TMVP has no more child soldiers. (ref A). Post will watch GSL actions closely to see if it follows through on its commitment. End Summary.

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Peiris, Back From DC, Understands  
Importance of Child Soldier Issue  
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[1](#)2. (C) On June 10, Minister of Export Development and Trade G.L. Peiris hosted a dinner for Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa, Justice Secretary Suhada Gamalath, UNICEF Country Representative Philippe Duamelle and U.S. Charge to discuss the issue of child soldiers. Attorney General C.R. De Silva, Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona, British High Commissioner Peter Hayes and Swiss Ambassador Ruth Flint also attended. Peiris organized the meeting following his recent visit to Washington for Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) talks. He stated that the issue of child soldiers surfaced in a number of his meetings in Washington, noting that the problem of child soldiers was preventing cooperation with the U.S. and undermining Sri Lanka's ability to

re-qualify for duty-free exports to the EU under the GSP trader concession. Peiris was familiar with Congressional restrictions on military cooperation under Sections 699(c) and (g) of the FY08 Foreign Assistance Act and observed that the prohibition under 699(c) would be the easiest to overcome, thereby allowing the U.S. to resume assistance for maritime interdiction. He emphasized that the GSL had zero tolerance for child soldiers and believed the issue could be resolved quickly.

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Gothabaya Urges UNICEF to Turn Over List,  
UNICEF Says No  
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13. (C) Gothabaya Rajapaksa relayed to the group that he had already instructed TMVP leader and newly elected Eastern Province Chief Minister Pillaiyan to release all remaining child soldiers and that Pillaiyan was currently insisting that child soldiers no longer served in the TMVP. Gothabaya asserted that if UNICEF would turn over its list of child soldiers the military would "take care of it in two days". (Note: Multiple political section contacts have reported that many of Pillaiyan's sub-commanders are resisting pressure to release the child soldiers under their control, ref A.) UNICEF Chief Duamelle explained that turning over the list was not possible because it would violate the trust that families who had reported recruitment of their children had placed in UNICEF. Charge and the UK High Commissioner noted that simply turning over the list would be contrary to

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\* Missing Section 002 \*  
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